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In the Footprints of Lincoln

BY THE EDITOR



Ford's Theatre, Washington, where Lincoln was assassinated



IN this one hundred and eleventh anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln is revealed the shining trinity of wisdom, justice and mercy—the incarnated wisdom with which great laws are made and stable governments organized, the wisdom of Plato transmitted thru the centuries. But wisdom is of no avail without justice. Is there a career in all history in which is intermingled these two qualities so completely? Justice was ever in Lincoln's mind, and yet there was always present the tempering

spirit of mercy. Is there such a character to be found in the record of the ages in whom these three supreme qualities of the fundamental virtues are so perfectly blended?

Human history moves in cycles. Each race in turn rises from barbarism to the acme of its importance, and perchance as swiftly to decadence. The extinction of races and nations is the pathos of the past. The rough barbarian, without riches, knowledge or influence, thru his virility and force, rises quickly, and often declines as rapidly. In every cycle towering figures appear, who arise irrespective of adverse conditions, perceive the genius of their race, and become its wise men, sages, prophets, priests, and leaders.

Such were the "Six Wise Men of Greece"; Moses, the Hebrew emancipator; Zoroaster, the fire-worshipper of Persia; Mohammed, the camel-driver of Arabia; Buddha, the great teacher of Asia; Merlin and other unnamed Druids of ancient Wales; Confucius of China; Cromwell of England; and others less known to fame, who expressed the soul of their people, and the irrepressible longing of a humanity that all but touched divinity.

Such a man, in the supreme sense, was Abraham Lincoln, born of the strenuous pioneers, whose forces had nearly spent themselves in settling Kentucky and Indiana, and whose descendants followed when the frontier line was far flung on the prairies of Illinois. From a mere lad, burdened with cares and sorrows, he ever stood face to face with people. Lincoln never turned his back on any person or problem. Thousands like him had led the half-savage life, schoolless, apparently doomed to a lifetime of sordid labor and tardy development, but this lad caught the vision thru the smoky glow of the pine knot, in the pages of the Bible, which he read and re-read, until its teachings became a part of his very life.

Lincoln lived so close to the soil in its virgin state that his human soul itself partook of the deep and enduring mysteries of Nature primeval. He believed in the simple ideals of right and wrong, of mercy and justice. He saw more clearly than the brilliant Seward "that irrepressible conflict" between free men and slaves, and yet he never lost his poise, or ever retraced his steps, when he made a movement forward. Analyzing the careers of American statesmen, none seem to have made so few mistakes, none so unerringly and mercifully wise in dealing with fellowmen.

What would have been Abraham Lincoln's idea of "preparedness"? We find in his life as a frontier militiaman, and in

his public addresses, the conviction that the American people were capable of taking up and carrying to success any undertaking, such as the defense of the country, the establishment of law and justice, and the settlement of great problems. There was no time for Lincoln to prepare for the great Civil War. It had virtually begun before his inauguration, and he made his first inaugural address with the conflict and the clash of arms rumbling in the South.

With that sad but almost saintly smile, and with never a bitter word, he passed over the sneers of ally and foe alike, and pressed on to new achievements, with the refrain of the song of the Union ever ringing in his ears. Lincoln's reply to the "Little Giant," in that historical open-air forum on the prairies of Illinois, was not an appeal to passion, but with calm wisdom, even-handed justice, and with tolerance and mercy, he approached the solution of each problem, as it appeared, taking them up one by one, and when they were settled, they were settled right and permanently.

There are living today in Illinois many who remember the historic debates of Douglas and Lincoln—when the brilliant and masterful eloquence of the "Little Giant" was matched with the high-pitched voice, plain simple utterances, and ingeniously outstretched hand of Abraham Lincoln. His opening words in these debates were full of sincere compliment and admiration of the eloquence of Douglas, but when it came to answering questions and squaring human act and word by the test, the two plus two of eternal verity, Abraham Lincoln was easily master. It was then that he laid down the proposition which unconsciously patterned the prologue of the great dreams of his life. "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand," quoted he, and he continued with his conviction, "I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be destroyed, I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect that it will cease to be divided."

The very defeats of Lincoln in his early life stand out in history as his greatest victories. Douglas won the senatorial honors, but died three years later, a man who had outworn his influence. Lincoln saw the eternal distinctions between right and wrong, and shattered the makeshifts of the hour as the great mountain peaks divide the evanescent clouds and scatter them.

Confronted with the perils of losing the support of loyal people in the border states, and of offending thousands of Northern supporters who could not understand why he should not at once proclaim a crusade against slavery, every day seemed to find the judgment of Lincoln tempered with this trinity of virtues—wisdom, justice and mercy—that form the beatitudes of statesmanship.



The house in Washington in which Lincoln died

He glorified the commonplace, and the commonplace in all life is glorious, for even death itself is often commonplace. To strike the common note is to attain wisdom; justice is reflected in the righteous and important execution of law; and we always recall Sir Great Heart in his ideals of mercy, for "what we need most is not so much to realize the ideal as to idealize the real."

In his life and activities we can trace incidents that would apply, in concrete instances, to each one of these three qualities. Many honest and self-sacrificing men were alienated by his apparent indifference toward those who would divide the Union and tear to tatters the traditions and sentiment of the Stars and Stripes. Many held he was too merciful to spies,

he approached his great work with an open mind, impartial and fair, with a prayer on his lips for guidance. He took up his responsibilities with wisdom and pursued his duties with justice; for today, after all these years of search and investigation, we can scarcely find a record of an injustice of the slightest and most trifling nature charged to Abraham Lincoln. At the close of his career, the crowning halo of mercy irradiated his last acts, when he again proved his friendly feeling for the South, ordering General Wertzell to give protection to the Virginia State Government and Legislature if it assembled, and to General Sherman to authorize Governor Vance of North Carolina to resume his duties with an assurance of recognition. Even amid the exhilaration following the victory at Appomattox, with a host of men at the North crying out for revenge even to the shedding of blood, Lincoln's hands were upraised in that mercy which bridged the bloody chasm between victor and vanquished.

We might paraphrase the lines of Edwin Markham to fit the trinity of ideals:

The Wisdom of the light that shines for all!
The Justice of the rain that falls on all!
The Mercy of the snow that hides all scars,
He built the rail pile as he built the state,
The conscience in him testing every stroke,
To make his deed the measure of a man.

* * *

More than a thousand books have been written about Abraham Lincoln, and the end is not yet, because the subject only increases in interest each year. There is not a poet, or a speaker or a writer, or a thinker, who does not long to give expression to the feeling within him concerning the towering genius of Lincoln.

His great name and fame are more than embalmed in books, more than immortalized in marble—Lincoln lives! When we

clasp hands, we feel that same throbbing magic impulse of human sympathy and friendship. When we look on a picture of Lincoln, we think of it as not merely a likeness—we feel that we could almost grasp the hand of that man and feel the pulsing throb of sympathy. There are yet those living who touched his flesh, and he still lives, a real and integral personality in our national life.

New England, that once looked askance upon the simple rail-splitter, is now proud to furnish him a genealogy rooted in Massachusetts soil. Of Quaker descent, he was the central figure in the bloodiest war in our history, but not one drop clings to his garments in the sanctified memory of his fame.

What other name could have been given him that so fitted his illustrious career? Abraham! With it we have the vision of the patriarch of old. Abraham! A name appropriate to the great work for which he was consecrated. Abraham! Father of the Multitude! A name that carried with it all the dignity of the ages, and yet bandied about by the little group on the corner, when he was called just Abe—"honest Abe." Perhaps the flickering lantern rays of Diogenes would have found the long-sought honest men around the corner in that crude cabin in Indiana, or the store at New Salem. This quest would have been halted before the figure of the man who was known to everyone as "honest Abe."

All the music of the masters comes from the eight notes of the octave. There may be a chromatic ripple or subtle undertone between the notes; there may be resounding chords and noble phrasing, but all must be compressed within the scope of the octave. The master composer, in arranging a sequence of notes, creates an immortal symphony, or a song that will never die. So, in the "music of the spheres," Abraham Lincoln, with the simple octave of life—the gamut of human emotions, seemed to play upon them in proper sequence, and never was there a discord in the wonderful harmonies born of his character.

"Four score years and eleven have passed." Read again those immortal lines at Gettysburg. Read again the classic phrases



Cabin of Lincoln's parents on Goose-nest Prairie, Illinois

deserters, and military offenders, whose acts threatened the very life of the republic. In those days the cartoonist portrayed Lincoln as a buffoon, a visionary, and today place him on Olympus with the gods, and speak his name with reverence. In the routine of his everyday life Lincoln's mind demanded first to ascertain the truth—which is wisdom; second to determine the fairness of the evidence in the case—which is justice; and in the last analysis he held himself free to withhold or to exercise that mercy vested in him as the supreme commander-in-chief of the Republic.

Altho almost every word of Abraham Lincoln's public life has been recorded, either by writer or hearsay, not one syllable breathes an echo of resentment or revenge. Amid the torrents of abuse, he never retaliated. If Abraham Lincoln had lived, Jefferson Davis never would have been captured and humiliated. This was indicated that evening when Lincoln was serenaded at the White House, celebrating the surrender of Lee, when the entire absence of bitterness was the keynote of his last spoken public words.

Lincoln and Davis were born in Kentucky within one year of each other, in homes not far apart. One the product of the log cabin. Davis of gentler birth, shared none of Lincoln's struggles in early life. With temperaments antipodal, their lives culminated in parallel duties in a titanic struggle. Davis was inaugurated as President of the Confederacy less than a month before Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office. A fortnight after Lincoln's assassination, the public career of Jefferson Davis ended with his capture. Each seemed to possess a peculiar fitness for the responsibility before him, and neither the North nor the South could have had leaders better fitted to present the issues settled by the Civil War than the two Kentucky lads, the pro-antagonisms of that fratricidal struggle.

Abraham Lincoln bade a tender farewell to the old friends and neighbors with foreboding, but he went to Washington without a policy. The other leaders had well-defined plans;

of his addresses, and in them find the music of ideals and words, so blended that they cling to our hearts with the tenacity of the old songs. The favorite melodies of today may be forgotten, but Lincoln's words will live on and on forever.

The individuality of Lincoln, eternal and unchangeable, rings true with his personality. Personality is the impersonation of individuality, and Abraham Lincoln's character always rang true with his reputation, whatever notes were struck, and the harmony of his career grows richer and more melodious with each recurring birthday.

* * * *

Lincoln's mind never scattered, it focused on the yea or nay without circumlocution or rattling rhetoric, and his brain worked in the direction he aimed his thought.

Veterans of the Civil War often tell of the time when "Uncle Abe" came down the line reviewing the troops, and of how their hearts seemed to beat with sympathy and silent affection for the man whose sad and melancholy eyes looked into theirs with a glow of tenderness and sympathy. The pomp and splendor of war was absent—it was the touch of Nature that made them kin. His heart bled for the soldiers wounded and dying on the field. His sympathy poured out to grieving mothers, wives, and sisters at home. His great heart was broken over and over again with each throbbing moment of that great conflict. It was not the loss of one, even in the broken arc of his own hearthstone, but of the myriads that bore down upon his soul, every hour of the day, and during the sleepless nights.

There are books about Lincoln as a lawyer, and the most remarkable thing about it is that a lawyer-author naively concedes that he was great because he was an absolutely "honest" lawyer. He was not afraid of facing the people with the truth or to brave popular clamor. He did not stoop to capitalize the prejudice and passions of the people for more power. Is it not time that we tear aside the veil of hypocrisy, wherever men are stirring the passions of envy and jealousy simply to promote political prestige? Lincoln maintained his convictions, without respect to shifting currents and even whirlwind of fury and fads. Even when the prospects of defeat for re-election stared him in the face, and the votes of the soldiers cast in the field went against him, he wrote a sealed letter and gave it to the



LINCOLN BY THE CABIN FIRE

"Lying down was Lincoln's favorite attitude while reading or studying. This remained a habit with him thruout life."—Henry C. Whitney in his "Life of Lincoln."

cabinet, in which he pledged his unwavering devotion to the cause of the Union, should his rival be elected. This was the stamp of the man's unswerving integrity of purpose. It was Lincoln who suggested and urged a compensatory emancipation upon the slave-holding states. It was Lincoln who resisted the efforts to deprive the South of her property rights and her homes. It was Lincoln who prompted Grant at Appomattox

to take "not one button or uniform" from the men who laid down their arms, for even these ragged clothes were needed at home. Not one horse that had been ridden in the many cavalry charges was taken, for the plowshare had now sup-



Log cabin, birthplace of Lincoln, near Hodgenville, Kentucky

planted the sword, and even the swords and the arms were carried back by the soldiers as mementoes of heroism. And the sons and the daughters of the South tonight are privileged to look upon the relics in their own homes of the gallantry of their fathers. Even the captured flags, won after many a bloody conflict, and taken as trophies to the North, have been returned; monuments for the blue and for the gray are erected impartially, and the scars of the battlefield obliterated. It was the mercy of Lincoln that made possible the reunion at Gettysburg, where the men who fought to destroy one another in that bloody conflict of more than fifty years ago, mingled in comradeship and messed together in the same tents. Is there a picture like this in all history? What an object lesson it furnishes to the old civilizations of Europe living under the ideals of Alexander, Cæsar and Napoleon, that military conquest ever conquered, without the wisdom, the justice and the mercy, as exemplified in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

When Lincoln arrived in Washington, there were many who felt themselves far superior to the common man who had been elected President, and there were generals who kept him waiting when he called, anxious to talk over plans, and one retired while Lincoln waited outside an hour. Could ordinary mortal ever endure such insults and indignities? And yet he understood just what he wanted to do. In after years the offender never forgot the lesson, altho there was never an unkind word in reference to the matter.

When Lincoln assumed the leadership of the Republican Party, he resisted firmly the counsels of radical politicians, hot-heads and partisans, who would achieve success thru the passions and emotions. Step by step, appealing to the heart and the reason, he accomplished results.

Lincoln recognized that permanence and strength followed the process of elimination. He did not deem it necessary to declaim as well as proclaim his messages, nor did he seem to feel that the statute books should be flooded with a mass of ill-considered, ill-digested, irrational and emotional legislation. Would not the memory of Lincoln's common sense suggest today a reversal of the tendency of recent years, and instead of adding legislation, to begin a systematic process of repealing and amending laws we have? And will the various state legislatures of the Union, one and indivisible, ever see the light of Lincoln's wisdom in enacting legislation that first kept in mind justice to all people, irrespective of station, not forgetting tolerance and the gentle spirit of mercy, again revealing the light of the trinity of ideals which marked all of his actions?

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At Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, a spot at the intersection of the states of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, the location

he indicated to General Howard, has been built a university to serve the mountain lads and lassies of that region, after the plans and ideals of Lincoln. In this section of the Appalachian range there dwell a people in whose veins flows the pure Anglo Saxon blood of the thirteen colonies. To the north and the west a system of public schools is maintained for the aliens whom adverse conditions overseas have sent to this country. To the south, the same educational advantages are provided for the colored population. Until the founding of this—the Lincoln Memorial University—there were few advantages offered to the people of the mountain region by which they could obtain an education—not as a free gift, but thru a plan enabling them to work for their tuition thru the labor of their own hands.

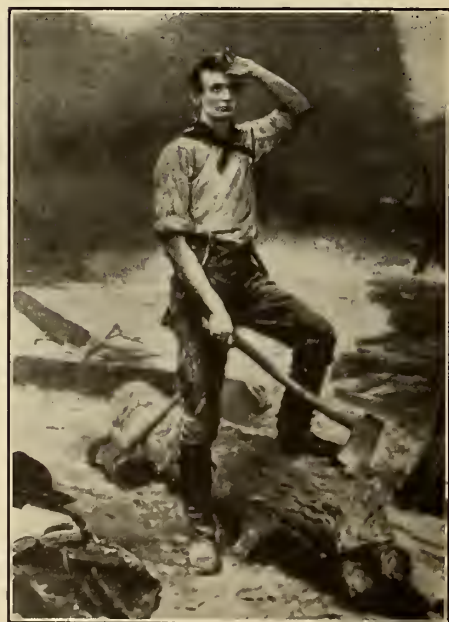
This was Lincoln's idea. He understood, no man better, the innate longing of the country boy and girl, the crying out of the soul for a chance to break the fetters forged by ignorance, and come forth free, untrammelled, worthy citizens of the United States. Under the present conditions, it is impossible to accommodate more than a very small number of students, and the project has been launched to provide more buildings and enlarged equipment; in fact, to bring to full fruition the plans so dear to the heart of Lincoln.

And what more noble cause than this? What more worthy of philanthropic interest? A most appropriate monument this to the man of lofty ideals—a monument that will endure, when chiseled marble has crumbled to decay, when eulogy has trembled into silence—a monument builded of the living flesh and blood, the throbbing hearts of these lads and lassies and their descendants for generations to come.

In these days when peace and prosperity, unity and amity bless our beloved land, our thoughts and hearts go out to those suffering from the aftermath of the war across the seas. I can fancy Abraham Lincoln arousing from a troubled couch as he did in days ago after one of those dreams that haunted his life. He felt the civil conflict would be the last great war on American soil, even tho it robbed the country of her flower of youth, even tho it required that the blood of one million men should stain our land. Now he sees the lives of

five million men offered in sacrifice upon the altar of Moloch. He perceived long before the people realized that the great statue of Moloch was but a hollow shell, in which were hidden the priests and royalty, building the fires, opening the great mouth to receive the innocent children for offerings and causing smoke and flame to burst from the nose and eyes, to frighten people and spur them to greater sacrifice.

Lincoln, as he glimpses this vision, remembered that it was written



THE RAIL SPLITTER
From the "Footprints of Abraham Lincoln"

"I will set my bow in the sky," when the radiance of rainbow appeared—a symbol of Divine promise irradiating colors of seven nations at war. In that rainbow he also recognized the symbol of the promise that the bloody deluge of wars shall subside, and that across the bitter waters stained with blood would fly the dove bearing the branch of olive—a pledge of no more wars.

Lincoln's birthday is fittingly celebrated with the white

candle, emblematic of the purity of his motives, a green candle, a symbol of undying remembrance; and the golden candle, which leaves his words and life an imperishable heritage, full of the glow of the sunrise and hope for the future. In those dark



"THE BOY LINCOLN"
By Eastman Johnson

days when he arose, with prayers on his lips, he saw the gleam of the stars in our flag—the first flag in all history to have emblazoned upon it a star, carrying the emblem of the light in the east which guided the wise men in the blue dawn of Bethlehem. He saw in our flag a suggestion of the glorious Gift of Galilee.

In 1898, on American soil, a tall, stoop-shouldered, blue-eyed prince of the royal blood, as he sat looking into the face of William McKinley, felt the impact of democracy in the very room where Lincoln gathered with his cabinet in the dark days. When he had descended the stairs, I saw this prince looking upon the flag floating proudly to the breezes, and he said, "What a great flag you have. Out of its folds has been born a new flag with a single star—the emblem of the free and independent republic of Cuba!"

In the bursting of the war blaze overseas there came the flash of the proclamation of a king, not phrased in terms of royal mandate, but in words which Abraham Lincoln might have used as he addressed the throngs on the frontier—"my fellow-citizens." In those simple words is a tribute to Abraham Lincoln, who brought to the world the full significance of fellowship in citizenship.

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In the hour glass, the sands of time continue to run as in the days of old, and how often fame seems like the hands of a clock ticking the hour! There are those whose fame flutters quickly by with the second hand, others more deliberate, with the minute hand, others leisurely with the hour hand, others measuring the day, and others the years, but Lincoln's fame lengthens into eons, aye into centuries of time.

Lincoln's fame comprehends the entire measurement of time. Not alone the illuminated face of the clock, but the steady swing of the pendulum. The inspiration of his life keeps us mindful of the necessity of winding the clock tonight, realizing that no matter what may have been the failures of today, there is ever the hope of tomorrow's fulfillment that comes with the tick-tock of Time's great clock, illumining the ever-living name and fame of Abraham Lincoln.